SAMUEL CHAMBERLAIN

ETCHER AND LITHOGRAPHER

GOODSPEED'S

MONOGRAPHS

No. 10

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A COMPACT BIOGRAPHY AND
APPRECIATION WITH
A COMPLETE
LIST OF
PRINTS

By
CHARLES D. CHILDS

BOSTON
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Church of St. Ayoul, Provins

SAMUEL CHAMBERLAIN, ETCHER AND LITHOGRAPHER

IT is a pleasure to consider here the work of one whose prints early promised much and have since borne out that promise. Samuel Chamberlain made his first etching in 1925. His interest in drawing, however, dates back to the time when as a boy, he found magazine advertisements a mine of material for the budding draughtsman. His scrapbook of this time probably contained few notes on Rembrandt, and was not flush with representations of the genius of Whistler, yet it must have suggested an interest which was uncommon to youngsters of his age.

Chamberlain was born Oct. 28, 1895, at Cresco, Iowa. His family moved, while he was still a boy, to the west coast. Life in a small lumber town in western Washington had little to offer in artistic environment. A village whose rough timber streets, like those of St. Petersburg, rested on driven piles, saw no crying need for an academy of art, and made no provision for higher education. It is to his mother, therefore, that Chamberlain gives acknowledgment for an influence which led him to study architecture at the University of Washington where he spent two years. Friends of these days remember him for his piano playing and for certain engaging personal characteristics, among which was a nonconformity to college standards of the day.

From Washington, Chamberlain, in 1915, came to Boston, where he entered the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, continuing his architectural work until the War caused an interruption, and he with many others left school and spent the next year in France. Here he was occupied, when he could find a leisure moment, in making sketches in pencil or in pen and ink, as a relief from the unpleasant tedium of soldiering. In these drawings he first portrayed the tumbled-down houses and picturesque lines of old-timbered Norman architecture, which has been the genesis of so many later etchings.

After the armistice, Technology saw the return of the student-soldier, who took up his studies with the firm intention of graduating a full-fledged architect. He says in this respect, "But it was merely another

Vieilles Maisons Dinan

case of an embryonic architect gone wrong. I was more interested in designing scenery for the Tech show and drawing silly pictures for the college funny paper than in wielding the T square. I wasn't even a fair student. Those poor professors had patience. I didn't last out the school year and gave up the architectural ghost to plunge into the sordid career of a free-lance commercial artist with no experience and as much money."

Such deprecation infers a becoming modesty in the artist, yet it is rather suggestive of a bad complex. His professors, strangely enough, speak well of his abilities and exhibit a marked interest in later activities, which have included not only the study of etching and lithography, but also the preparation of numerous articles for architectural periodicals. These articles, mainly pertaining to French, Spanish, and Italian city or countryside, convey an impression of the author's passionate interest in and appreciation of old-world architecture, customs and peoples. They contain, too, the added spiciness of a humor which is alive to the curious and unique in everything, and which may contrast in a sparkling and satirical manner the worldly wickedness of a Monte Carlo with the beauty of old Menton,—"Like the bright body of a butterfly, whose gaudy wings have sprouted out on two sides, tinselled with the dross of frivolous villas and pretentious hotels."

To look back a bit :—The life of a would-be commercial artist turned out to be no bed of roses, and free-lancing demanded that he become a jack-of-all-

trades. His repertoire expanded, and he might be found one day drawing an advertisement for bath salts, while the next saw him busy with sketches for a boot and shoe journal. Again he could compose a department store window card, or satisfactorily delineate lovely ladies climbing into Egyptian bath tubs. Perhaps the climax and turning point was reached when in desperation he accepted a five dollar commission to cartoon a noted water bottle manufacturer "who was to be banqueted by his adoring employees." But the artist's generosity exceeded that of his patrons and his oeuvre-d'art gave the manufacturer a surplus of avoirdupois. As a result, negotiations were brought to a close and the water-bottle delegation withdrew in high dudgeon.

Free-lancing after a time almost surely encompasses the atrophy of aesthetic sensibility and requires that originality of thought be subordinate to the criterion of popular demand. It is fortunate, therefore, that Chamberlain now found a use for his architectural knowledge. He spent some months in the preparation of a series of color studies for a projected war memorial in the Charles River basin. Difference of opinion and lack of public support caused this undertaking to be abandoned. Remuneration for his labor, however, made it possible for Chamberlain to return to France where he has since made his home, with the exception of a year given to teaching at Ann Arbor, Michigan, and an occasional visit of shorter duration.

In 1921, and again in 1922, we find Chamberlain

"on his own," sketching, tramping the country over, and prospecting for anything and everything pictorially agreeable to an architect and artist. He had a wonderful time "perpetrating perfectly awful sketches," which, however, gave him a practiced hand and a more than superficial knowledge of the possibilities and limitations of pen and pencil technique. That his subjects were well considered and sound in treatment is evidenced by their appearance at this time as illustrations in several American magazines. The "Century", "Arts and Decoration", and the "New York Times" accepted and reproduced many drawings, whose intrinsic attractiveness was supplemented by the artist's notes, sometimes humorous, sometimes serious, but always pertinent and never dull.

France is so rich in picturesque spots that it is not difficult to understand the sympathetic appreciation which Chamberlain has given its portraiture. Whether his subject be city or village, there is much in each which captures the eye and marks a spot rich in historic associations.

In 1923, Chamberlain began the study of lithography, a very natural progression since lithographic stone receives the crayon stroke in much the same manner that paper receives the pencil. Stone offers little resistance to freedom of movement, and in consequence, the lithograph has all the spontaneity of a drawing with the added advantage of unlimited duplication of impression.

In 1924 several prints were completed and shown

Fishing Boats in Menton

as a group in the publication *Vingt Lithographies du Vieux Paris.* If we are to be critical of this first venture into the graphic arts, we may say that many of the lithographs show a likeness to Prout or Bonington, and in so comparing we do but condone the fault and praise the motive. Granted that he constructs his buildings as did Prout, and that he has a share of Bonington's grace in the nuances of tone and color, Chamberlain has moulded his own style on principles that are proven by precept. The strength of a Prout and the fluent ease of a Bonington are reflected in him because they are the natural result of an inherent artistry and a sound training.

Paris, as it is presented in these twenty lithographs, is hardly the Paris of wide boulevards and grand cathedrals; an occasional glimpse of grandeur —yes—as in *Le Dome de L'Eglise du Val-de-Grace.* But, for the most part, we are taken into the side streets and quiet corners, where strange uneven contours of roofs and chimneys make fascinating skylines; where graven saint in his sculptured niche of the little corner "Eglise" rubs shoulders with sodden sinner of alley and "Vins" shop. Here, indeed, is an inimitable hodge-podge of types, animate and inanimate. See, for instance, the *Rue Saint Severin, Paris.* Down the narrow street an old market woman picks her careful way between rows of lounging idlers. On one side towers a church with sinuous, staring gargoyles, screaming defiance to a row of impassive shop fronts whose dress betrays a not too immaculate toilet, and whose coiffure shows

the ravages of age. Just above the sidewalk swings a sign whose painted "Mobiloil" gargoyle pays respectful homage to his kin across the street.

It is difficult to restrain the words of enthusiastic admiration which this and other prints of the Paris series evoke. Chamberlain has since done other lithographs equally fine, yet he has every reason to be proud of his initial effort. The merit of later prints in no way eclipses that of his first publication.

Following the completion of *Vingt Lithographies* Chamberlain shook the dust of Paris from his heels and began a tour of exploration. He visited southern France, and made an excursion into Spain in search of architectural "gold." The record of his experiences may be found in contemporary issues of the "American Architect" for which he was foreign correspondent. In a series of articles he gave his impressions of the people, the country, and everything connected therewith in a fashion which puts a Will Rogers travelogue to shame. Chamberlain has at his command an exceptional ability to make a group of words snap into line like soldiers. He marshals a series of adjectives into word formations which have the "kick" of a French seventy-five and the same precision of aim. One follows his pages in the "American Architect" as one might read a novel with the added pleasure which is at hand in the accompanying illustrations.

Even the best of vacations must have an end and Chamberlain's was no exception. He returned to Paris and to the business of print making. His

experience with lithography bred a curiosity as to what might be done with the etching needle and with the urge strongly upon him he began to experiment under the able instruction of Monsieur Edouard Leon. In this year, 1925, he produced a number of interesting plates, some of which were remarkably successful and others of which were obviously "feelers" with the stamp of inexperience clearly apparent.

The rules of etching are not learned in a day. Because etching is so capricious a mistress; because the copper yields its full beauty with reticence: there are few who make the most of its possibilities. Chamberlain made the right kind of a beginning. He applied himself closely to the study of technique and, following the good advice of Monsieur Leon he soon showed encouraging progress. He already had one advantage of fundamental importance; the power of composing a picture and setting it down in line without alteration. No one appreciates this ability more than the unfortunate etcher who lacks it.

To Monsieur Edouard Leon and his associates Chamberlain owes much, and he is warm in his appreciation, as the following letter testifies:

"Maybe it would be of interest to reveal the fact that the only critics I've ever had have been the old Frenchmen connected with the producing end of the print business in Paris. My best friends here are the lithographer, the copper plate maker, the lithographic ink maker and Monsieur Leon, my genial 'patron.' I've hung around these four ateliers by the week and have picked up a good knowledge of

A Side Street, Beauvais

their trade. For instance, I can transfer a lithograph from transfer paper, which process, with all its applications of talc and rosin and acid and gum arabic —and elbow grease, is not mastered by many outside the lithographers' ranks. The copper plate man on the Ile St. Louis has a gloriously picturesque old barn, dim and shadowy, where all of his plates are hand hammered and hand planed and finished. I've learned the rudiments of that trade, too, and a fair knowledge of ink making from a little hunchback, (yes, across from Notre Dame), on the Quai de Montebello. These boys are real craftsmen in the old French tradition, (two of them knew Whistler in a professional way) and I value their advice greatly. Another intriguing friend of mine runs the paper store which imports from China and Japan, and he lets me rummage thru his shop whenever I wish. Monsieur Leon, who is a product of the Ecole des Beaux Arts of a few generations back, spent much time in teaching me the tricks of plate printing, which business I know well enough to suit me—and well enough to decide that the energy expended is out of proportion to the economy achieved."

With the knowledge which he had acquired from Monsieur Leon, Chamberlain made new plates which were entirely free from amateurish awkwardness. Of these new prints some were awarded honorable mention at the Paris salon of 1925. One in particular shows so marked a development, so ready a command of the needle and acid, that it deserves special mention here. *A Side Street in Beauvais*

Buttresses of Beauvais Cathedral

is wholly satisfying in conception and in execution. The subject, a row of ancient shops slowly settling into decay, presented no unusual pictorial features. The beauty of this plate is in the modulations of tone in shadow and sunlight secured by skillful manipulation of the acid. The old houses, weary with years of buckle and strain, are relaxed and fallen in upon themselves, each relying upon the shoulders of its brothers for the support which its own frame may no longer offer. Sharply silhouetted against their walls long afternoon shadows carelessly outline the shapelessness of eaves and roof lines. Overhead deep white clouds surge rythmically across the sky. Each line of this composition has direction and purpose. Each tone value has meaning. The living, feeling quality here has not been surpassed in any later etching.

From the sometimes crude, withal vigorous treatment that marked the first etchings of 1925, there evolved a more refined though no less virile manner of handling which indicated the style Chamberlain has since established in such plates as *The Buttresses of Beauvais Cathedral* and *The Church of St. Ayoul, Provins.* These prints, here illustrated, intensify in no small measure the satisfaction of accomplishment which is present in *A Side Street in Beauvais.*

For Chamberlain 1925 was a year of achievement. In this period also he first became familiar with drypoint. To those unacquainted with the medium, drypoint is a term applied to the process of drawing on a copper or zinc plate with a pointed steel needle

Remnants of Gothic Lacework

which scratches the artist's design into the bare surface of the metal, at the same time throwing up a small furrow or edge of metal that serves to catch the ink which is later applied to the plate. This furrow, or edge, of irregular height and thickness, is termed burr. When the plate is printed, strong pressure forces the ink out of the lines scratched in the copper onto the paper upon which the plate was placed in the press. The burr releases its ink in an irregular line which much resembles a pen line quickly blotted. The deep, soft, velvet quality which good drypoint bears is a product of this burr. Drypoint, when well treated, has a beauty which is approximated only in the best work of the great English mezzotinters whose rich tones were produced by a somewhat similar process.

Chamberlain has the ability to draw correctly and the confidence in execution which are necessary to more than ordinary performances. His drypoint plates, the output of 1926 and 1927, have a maturity of viewpoint and a skillfulness of handling that tell of past experience and give promise for the future. *The Battered Boat, Villefranche*, is excellently rendered. Simple in design, it has dignity and balance of composition, and the lines, deeply charged with burr, are placed with an economical insight which recognizes the value of restraint. The necessity and meaning of white spaces are appreciated and these spaces are not filled with ill-considered and purposeless needle strokes. *Old Menton* has the same coherence of design and rendering as has *The Bat-*

Old Menton

tered Boat. These two prophesy good things to come.

In 1926 Chamberlain received the Simon Guggenheim fellowship for study in etching and engraving. In accordance with the provisions of this fellowship, he is to spend the coming months in England where he will study drypoint and etching with Malcolm Osborne, the well-known English etcher. We wish him the success he justly deserves. He is a very modest fellow, who much prefers honest criticism to dishonest praise or flattery and is generous in admitting his faults as we may see. "Among my many faults, all of the boys agree that I have two glaring ones, too many blacks, instead of a lot of grays and one black and one white; and lack of vigor and movement in the human elements of my plates. I feel a third discrepancy very keenly, namely, that my subject matter is foreign to the age in which we live. After a winter's study in England, (I'm enrolled to study under Malcolm Osborne, A. R. A., of the School of Engraving of the Royal College of Art, London) I hope to be soundly enough equipped to tackle the American scene with an appropriate vigor." We agree with some of his criticisms and admit some of his faults, with confidence that what is most unsatisfactory will be remedied and in the belief that future work may stand on its own merits without fear of criticism. Chamberlain's modesty, his first-rate technical proficiency and artistic ability unite with a sincerity of purpose which will not easily admit defeat. These qualities are very happily

The Battered Boat, Villefranche

expressed in a letter from Mrs. Chamberlain to the writer: "His vision is so sure and trained that I have rarely seen him erase or change a line in a drawing. The same thought and care existed in his etching from the time he started studying with Monsieur Edouard Leon in Paris, and he has spoiled or discarded remarkably few plates."

NOTES ON SAMUEL CHAMBERLAIN

Born, Oct. 28, 1895, at Cresco, Iowa. Education: University of Washington, 1913-15; Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1915-17, 1919-20; American Field Service Fellowship, 1923-24; studied etching with M. Edouard Leon, 1925. First Hon-

orable Mention in Engraving at the Paris Spring Salon, 1925.

Instructor in Architectural Design, 1925-26, Assistant Professor, 1926, University of Michigan.

Publications: "Vingts Lithographies du Vieux Paris," 1924; "Sketches of Northern Spanish Architecture," 1925; illustrated articles in the "American Architect," "Architecture," the "World Traveler;" plates and illustrations in "Pencil Points," the "Journal of the American Institute of Architects," the "Century Magazine," "Arts and Decoration," "House and Garden," "The Architectural Record," and the Magazine Section of the "New York Times."

COMPLETE LIST OF ETCHINGS AND LITHOGRAPHS BY SAMUEL CHAMBERLAIN

ETCHINGS

No.	Title	Date	Size	No. of Imps.	Notes
1	A Gateway in Seville	1925	7⅞x5⅛	100	
2	A Side Street in Beauvais	1925	13¼x9⅜	100	
3	Amalfi	1925	7x7	100	
4	Houses on the River, Albi	1925	5⅞x4⅛	100	
5	Old Houses in Lisieux.	1925	7½x4⅝	100	*Soft ground*
6	Old Houses in Rouen	1925	10⅛x7⅝	100	
7	Semur-en-Auxois	1925	6⅛x9½	100	
8	The Blacksmith's Shop, Senlis	1925	8¾x11⅛	100	
9	The Buttresses of Beauvais Cathedral	1925	8⅝x5	100	
10	The Church of St. Ayoul, Provins	1925	5¾x7¾	100	
11	The Church of San Giovanni Battiste, Siracusa	1925	6¼x5½	100	
12	The Church at Sezanne	1925	8x3⅛	100	
13	The Curiosity Shop, Paris	1925	5½x7½	100	
14	The Cypresses, Siracusa	1925	7x8½	100	*Soft ground*
15	The Fish Market, Chartres	1925	7⅜x10⅞	100	*Soft ground*

Dimensions are of the full surface of the plate.
The vertical measure is always given first,
O. P. Out of Print

No.	Title	Date	Size	No. of Imps.	Notes
16	The Gateway of Santa Maria, Burgos	1925	6x4¾	100	
17	The Giant Buttress, Bourges	1925	7⅝x5½	100	*Soft ground*
18	The Ile-de-la-Cite, Paris	1925	10⅝x11¾	100	
19	The Loggia di Lanzi, Florence	1925	11¼x7⅝	100	
20	Taormina	1925	10⅞x7	100	
21	A Gateway in Toledo	1926	6x4		Plate made for frontispiece to "The Print Connoisseur," April, 1926.
		DRYPOINTS			
22	Montrichard in May	1925	6¼x4¾	20	
23	Springtime in Senlis	1925	9⅛x7⅛	O. P.	
24	The Beach, Minori	1925	7⅛x6½	O. P.	
25	The Bridge of Pinos, Spain	1925	3⅛x5¼	O. P.	
26	The Rue Daubenton, Paris	1925	8⅛x5½	O. P.	
27	A Study of Trees	1926	5x7	255	Plate made for "The Graphic Processes" by Louis A. Holman.
28	An Alley in Pont-Audemer	1926		O. P.	
29	Les Oliviers, Menton	1926		O. P.	
30	Old Ann Arbor	1926	6x8⅞	30	
31	Old Houses on Liberty St., Ann Arbor	1926	6x8⅞	30	
32	Remnants of Gothic Lacework	1926	9x4½	50	
33	The Farm Gate, Virolet	1926	7x5	25	
34	The Kitchen Door	1926	4½x6⅛	60	

No.	Title	Date	Size	No. of Imps.	Notes
35	The Poplars	1926	5x7	25	
36	The Porches, Dinan	1926	8¼x6	50	
37	The Winding Road	1926	8⅛x5⅞	50	
38	Vitre	1926	4x5¾	75	
39	Cathedral Spires, Angers	1927	9¼x5¾	75	
40	Old Menton	1927	7x5	75	
41	Petite Venise, Colmar	1927	5x7	60	
42	The Battered Boat, Villefranche	1927	4½x6¼	75	
43	The Hilltop, Villefranche	1927	4⅜x5⅛	60	
44	The Quais, St. Tropez	1927	4¼x5¾	75	
45	The Veterans, Josselin	1927	4½x7	75	
46	The Village Church, Menilles	1927	7x5	10	
47	The Waterfront, Villefranche	1927	5⅛x7	75	

LITHOGRAPHS

48	Ancien Couvent des Cordeliers	1924		O. P.	
49	L'Eglise de St. Etienne du Mont	1924		O. P.	
50	L'Eglise de St. Nicholas de Chardonnet	1924		O. P.	
51	A Gateway in Perpignan	1925	11x7⅛	O. P.	
52	Chateaudun	1925	7¼x9⅛	O. P.	
53	The Chateau in the Lot	1925	4x7½	O. P.	
54	The Cloister, St. Benoit	1925	4x8	O. P.	
55	The Rue Mouffetard, Paris	1925	10x15	35	

No.	Title	Date	Size	No. of Imps.	Notes
56	The Tower in Andujar	1925	13x10	O. P.	
57	Colmar	1927	13½x8¾	40	
58	Fishing Boats, Menton	1927	11¾x16¼	50	
59	Menton Tenements	1927	8½x16¼	50	
60	The Broom Shop, Lucca	1927	5¾x9	50	
61	The Farm Gate, Vernonnet	1927	13½x9½	30	
62	The Sheltered Street, Vitre	1927	9¼x13¾	35	
63	The Spires of Coutances	1927	15x9¾	35	
64	Vieilles Maisons, Dinan	1927	7½x10½	35	

In 1924, under the title "Vingt Lithographies du Vieux Paris," twenty lithographs were published in a portfolio, printed by Gaston Dorfinant at Paris, and limited to 100 copies. Each print is approximately 13x20 inches.

GOODSPEED'S MONOGRAPHS

EDITED BY LOUIS A. HOLMAN

Of interest to all lovers
of prints and of books.

THESE are in no sense catalogues of prints for sale. Usually they deal with the work of a single etcher, giving the facts of his life, his portrait, an authoritative list of his etchings and several reproductions of his work.

They are well printed on dull, coated paper, in heavy paper or board covers; attractive and useful pamphlets that such institutions as the Boston Public Library, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, add to their collections and index as they are published. Number 4 is used in the Fine Arts Course at Dartmouth.

The following is the list to date: —

	PAPER.	BOARDS.
1. *Arthur William Heintzelman, Etcher.*	$ .25	—
2. *Sears Gallagher's Etchings of Boston.*	(*Out of Print*)	
3. *Hornby's Etchings of the Great War.*	.25	—
4. *Rembrandt and his Etchings.*	.25	.75
5. *Albert Durer; the Man in his own Eyes and in the Eyes of his Neighbors.*	.25	.75
6. *George C. Wales, Etcher of the Sea.*	.25	.75
7. *John Taylor Arms, Aquatinter.*	.25	.75
8. *Old Maps and their Makers. 1st Ed.*	1.00	—
" " " " " *2nd* "	—	1.50
9. *Prints for the Layman.*	—	1.00
10. *Samuel Chamberlain, Etcher & Lithographer*		.75

Others to follow

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